CHAPTER IV

PÉDAGOGIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

4.0. Introduction

The opening up for discussion of the author-publisher interface in materials production has, it is hoped, brought to light several issues that would alter the way the interaction is viewed and judged. However, before launching into an analysis of the case studies in Chapter III, a few points need to be reiterated and re-emphasised. The two quotations below highlight the first of these issues.

"Times have changed since a certain author was executed for murdering his publisher. They say that when the author was on the scaffold he said goodbye to the minister and to the reporters, and then he saw some publishers sitting in the front row below, and to them he did not say goodbye. He said instead, 'I'll see YOU later'” (Barrie 2003),

and

"Publishing would be fun if it weren’t for authors” (Macmillan qtd. in Legat 82).

The first statement, made at the fag end of the nineteenth century by a successful writer (of fiction) and the second by a publishing stalwart, are used here to reiterate the fact that author-publisher relations have never been smooth sailing at any point in the long history of writing and publishing. Though said
in jest, it nevertheless represents a well recognisable and widely held belief both in the world of creative writing vis-à-vis textbook writing, and publishing.

The second issue revolves around two assumptions.

1. “Manuscripts and books are mere commodities; dead, not living things. Such an assumption ignores the peculiar and indeed parental relationship of the author to his book, which has taken him months, and possibly years of lonely, concentrated work. The realisation of this is the beginning of wisdom in a publisher” (Unwin 19).

2. “The manuscript is your baby, maybe your only child, but the publisher may find a dozen or so new babies on his doorstep every morning and has several hundred, if not thousands of older children overrunning his warehouse and his entire establishment, all of them calling simultaneously for his undivided attention” (Unwin 15).

The third issue is based on the following observation: “The teacher-the student/ the teacher-the examiner, the Boards of Study member, the publisher, the author — the author is part of this system. It’s quite a simplification to talk about the interference on the part of the publisher in the work of the author without looking at the big picture” (Sriraman 2002).
The relevance of these three points is to reveal the stages this study has progressed through. It started with the basic assumption that presupposed a discord in the association. It moved on to an understanding of individual grievances. And it culminated in an awareness of the true meaning of the word ‘interface.’ That is, often there is some intermediate component between the two systems which connects the interfaces together. And that component has a significant role to play in the individual workings of the two systems.

ASSUMPTION (ATOMISTIC)  
\[ \Downarrow \]  
UNDERSTANDING  
\[ \Downarrow \]  
AWARENESS (HOLISTIC)

The macrocosmic world of education includes the microcosmic world of language teaching and learning, within which are several hierarchies. The author and publisher together form one aspect of this multi-faceted mechanism and the whole being a sum of its parts, the relationship between the two is predetermined and controlled both from within and outside the interface. Theoretical data combined with first-hand, documented evidence prove that the author and publisher have viewed the actions of the other suspiciously and as strange and irrational because of a lack of awareness of the opposite party’s constraints. The ‘fissures’ were identified and isolated keeping the larger framework as a point of reference. The next section analyses the dichotomies (first listed by Bell and Gower, 1998) that emerged from the case studies.
4.1. Analysis of the Dichotomies that Emerged from the Case Studies

The reasons for authors and publishers behaving as they do cannot be simplified and categorised on a scale of one to ten. They have to often times contend with the constraints and challenges of an educational system that is still ensconced in colonial ideology and is still to develop a wholly indigenous identity, a decision making process that is anything but decentralised, pedagogic innovations that haven’t yet percolated to the grass roots level, the paucity (often due to the misuse) of resources to keep pace with reforms be it in human resource development or infrastructure up-gradation and shifting market scenarios coupled with perceptual disparities among consumers (teachers, learners, parents) be it for a language like English or a subject like mathematics. The investigation of this phenomenon with special focus on materials production for language teaching threw up several dichotomous issues, which had a bearing on the final outcome of the study, the fulcrum itself being dichotomous: the analysis of two contradictory perceptions or opinions, namely, the author’s and the publisher’s and the individual diatribes in their interpersonal dealings in the area of textbook writing. The degrees of dissention vary and are case sensitive — xenophobic authors are as rare as bigoted publishers, but sparring though not the norm is not the exception either. An analysis of the dichotomies that emerged from the case studies will be the focus of this section. Testimonials from the individual case studies are given for substantiating the dichotomous issues.
Fig. 1 Diagrammatic representation of the dichotomies that emerged from the case studies

ACADEMIC Vs. COMMERCIAL

SYLLABUS Vs. LEARNER

AUTHOR Vs. EDITOR

TEACHER NEEDS Vs. LEARNER NEEDS

TIME Vs. QUALITY

SOCIO-POLITICAL Vs. ACADEMIC

AESTHETIC Vs. PEDAGOGIC

INNOVATION Vs. CONVENTION
4.1.1. **Dichotomy 1: Time vs. Quality**

There are four aspects to this dichotomy. While the obvious one is the quantity: quality ratio, the aspect of time in relation to the market, author selection and the inroads made by technology are also highlighted under two broad headings.

4.1.1.1. **Author Testimonials**

**Prof. K. Venkatakrishnan:** Deadlines. Publishers don't give enough time to plan, and write because they have a schedule and have to carry the book to schools before other publishers. One restraint or main constraint was time. To offset this, for example, if the themes selected by the author are not liked by the editor-publisher, the author should know about it well in time.

**Prof. V. Sasikumar:** Private publishers want to put in a lot of effort into the making of a book because there is competition which is totally lacking in the government setup, because it is a monopoly of the government. One of the items of competition is the quality. Normally no pressure by way of time and there is the incentive of more money from the private publisher.

4.1.1.2. **Publisher Testimonials**

**Mr. Krishnadev Rao:** Newer publishers don't have the time to understand the real needs of the market in their rush to keep pace with newer trends. They do not give themselves the time to think about the many layers that go into the making of a book: nor the value additions that go into the
materials especially its layout, design, colour etc., nor communicate the intrinsic worth of the materials they produce.

Another reason has been the liberalisation of the markets. To keep pace with this growing demand, the newer publishers have compromised on quality; the ratio is very difficult to maintain: quality: quantity. The consumer as a result, with the mind-boggling variety available, doesn’t have the time to understand/choose what he/she really needs. And the publisher doesn’t have the time to deal with and communicate with the consumer.

Also, the entire process of book making has simplified with the advent of newer technologies, computerization, and printing technology has also changed very much.

**Dr. Vani Vasudevan:** We are not at all averse to new authors but often one does not have the time to experiment. When time is available one can certainly work with new authors. Hence often it is not a question of preference but convenience.

**Mr. G. Olivannan:** Technology has helped the publisher or a lot of time would be spent on printing. Earlier five to six months was required to bring out a book. Now it’s over in a matter of weeks, if all things go smoothly.
4.1.2. Dichotomy 2: Innovation vs. Convention

Keeping abreast of new trends is not only a necessity it is an inescapable truth for publisher and author alike. And this should be achieved without undermining the comfort level the older materials have established. An extremely tough proposition, achieving a via media could eventually make the difference between a successful book and a failure. And as Zombory-Moldovan puts it: publishers have a duty to reform by stealth: that is, to smuggle in 'progressive' ideas under the mantle of 'acceptable' material (89).

4.1.2.1. Author Testimonials

Prof. V. Sasikumar

1. Innovation can be 25% of new concepts — gradually add on in a course of a few years. The textbook has a wonderful chance for influencing things happening in the classroom; reform can be brought in through the textbook; the analogy of the municipal water supply system — if you are convinced that a small amount of fluoride is necessary for the well being of people's teeth, the best way is to put that quantity in the water supply. Don't expect people to buy fluoride toothpaste. This is an unobtrusive, easy, inexpensive way to do it. If you put reforms in the textbook they have a wonderful chance of reaching the end of the conveyer belt — the school-teacher-parents-public in general.
2. Corporate publishers were easier to handle because they were eagerly looking for innovation and had no hesitation in incorporating suggestions.

3. Innovation was brought in by adding a letter to parents at the beginning of the book. Parents have this idea that they can manage the teaching of English if they had the time. Parental interference and hostility towards teachers is quite common. Teachers-parents-learners are working together and there is no point in antagonizing parents — their support and consent is essential to carry out innovation.

4.1.2.2. Publisher Testimonials

Dr. Malathy Krishna

The publisher’s main concerns are public readiness, standardization and conformity: 25% new, 75% conventional. New approaches should be subtle, not prominent.

Mr. Krishnadev Rao

1. Revision became necessary because “Gulmohar” was not bearing fruit financially as well as it had before. So we had to relook at it and alter it as necessary to take on board current expectations so that it continued to be a commercial success without losing out on any of its intrinsic worth.
2. Competition was also limited till that point of time. Till then not too many publishers published ELT textbooks other than British publishers.

**Dr. Vani Vasudevan**

25% to 30% new materials and 70% old materials is the ideal ratio. The publisher has to contend with the winds of change. But, innovation should sit well with what is already there. There should be no sharp new edges; one should bring in innovation cautiously and based on market feedback.

**Mr. G. Olivannan**

Market forces sometimes force you to make innovations; like for example, the influence of the Internet. Imported books flooding the market also force you to adapt and change. Cannot stick to tradition because you will be outdated.

**Mr. J. Lakshmi Narayanan**

40% to 60% new. Originality is required, good thought process, sensing priorities before they become common.

**4.1.3. Dichotomy 3: Academic vs. Commercial Value**

Academic value or business sense — making this choice is the publisher’s biggest dilemma. For authors, to write for a quality conscious publisher who promises long term, steady benefits or for one who provides a
quick, ‘strike-it-rich’ plan is the dilemma – and this is determined largely by the individual’s ethical and moral predilections.

4.1.3.1. Author Testimonies

**Prof. A.E. Subramaniam**

I met with no interference from any of the established and better-known publishers either, except that on an occasion or two I was required to excise a detail here or another there, for the sake of being politically correct. I was asked, against my inclination to include in my selection, passages with themes such as communal harmony, patriotism, civic responsibilities, even population control etc., purely for their didactic value, without reference to their literary merit.

**Prof. K.R. Narayanswamy**

1. The author is the best judge of the book as an academic product, while the publisher is the best judge of what kind of book will sell, the length, the price, etc.

2. I had occasion to drop a couple of units of a grammar book I had written for a publisher because the book was getting too bulky to find enough buyers for the company to make profit. I was unhappy about dropping the units for academic reasons but quickly reconciled myself to what I thought was a reasonable demand from the publisher. As the author, I am just as interested as the publisher in the sale of my book.
Prof.V. Sasikumar

With the private publisher, books were economically sized, but not economically priced. The author is happy with this because higher the price, more the royalty.

Prof.T. Sriraman

The commercial aspect of the book is most important – even for the author. Ideology comes later. A reputable publisher strikes a balance between the two: commercial success and academic value.

4.1.3.2. Publisher Testimonies

Dr.Malathy Krishna

The publisher’s dilemma/conflict is whether to be an academic or a businessman

Mr.Krishnadev Rao

If the author’s ideas have singular advantages to what are currently available in the market, they are considered even if the idea is economically not viable. The publisher is often forced to alter these ideas to adopt market trends.

Dr.Vani Vasudevan

However much one would like academic value to be the main criterion ultimately it has to balance out. Without that balance we would not survive.
Mr. G. Olivannan

Both are inseparable. It is like the left eye and right eye. Only if you open both eyes you can see. The first run of the book happens with good marketing. But there won’t be a second reprint if the book is poor academically.

Dr. Deepa Chattopadhyay

Ideally, both are as important. The academic value cannot be undermined – the objectives one sets out, the profile of the book, the methodology and approach, the percentage of innovation planned, etc. A publisher has the responsibility to balance all these out and present them with the specific market in view.

Mr. J. Lakshmi Narayanan

Any book having its own inherent academic value would easily find its own market. The publisher on his part should create an awareness of such a book among the readers. Therefore in the absence of intelligent marketing, any book with high academic value seldom reaches its targeted audience. So marketing for the publisher and value of contents for the author.
4.1.4. Dichotomy 4: Socio-political vs. academic demands

Textbooks have been described as a potent tool in creating and moulding social consciousness. A young child’s introduction to the world outside the four walls of the classroom is through the textbook. A solution to the debate on whether the textbook should mirror social reality or present a doctored version of it is still elusive. But for the publisher and author the real problem is what to prioritise — textbook as a reflection of societal norms or textbook as a pedagogic necessity. By concentrating on the textbook’s academic and pedagogic role in the classroom will they have to discount its other manifestation? How do they achieve a balance of ideology and pedagogy?

4.1.4.1. Author Testimonies

Prof. A.E. Subramaniam

On an occasion or two I was required to excise a detail here or another there, for the sake of being politically correct.

Prof. K.R. Narayanaswamy

Among the publishers I dealt with, only one publisher had their own ideological baggage to carry. They were against sexual stereotyping, against violence and cruelty, against ethnic jokes, against offending anyone or any group of people; they were for caution, which at times bordered on pusillanimity, and for the politically correct. Most of these principles are unexceptionable in theory and I have no quarrel with
them. My quarrel, however, was with the manner in which they were interpreted and enforced by the zealous in-house staff.

Prof.K. Venkatakrishnan

A short story by Rajaji on Vinayaka had to be removed because the committee felt it reflected religious bias.

Prof.T. Sriraman

In my first book I smuggled in something more after the selection was made: Macmillan College Prose - first essay... ‘Letter to a Teacher,’ was not politically correct, it attacked the establishment. But the other essays were from RadhaKrishnan, Gandhi, Chesterton, etc. because certain things are not within our control.

4.1.4.2. Publisher Testimonies

Dr. Malathy Krishna

The publisher should have social awareness/consciousness not to offend any community; face value is important but the publisher is not the guardian of social awareness — can’t decide what the target audience should read [if so, he is arrogant] — he can’t change society with books — can’t paint a rosy picture of the world.

Mr. Krishnadev Rao

A good book too is (for me from the marketing side), one that does not forsake the social responsibilities, doesn’t give up our strong social/
moral values but at the same time addresses the aspirations and expectations of both the teacher and the student.

**Dr. Vani Vasudevan**

The textbook in an insidious way has tremendous influence in the classroom because it can create a strong impression on the students. This has far-reaching implications. Casteism, sexism and similar bias creeps in; bad textbooks reinforce them. Good practices, values and thoughts can be reinforced subtly through textbooks.

### 4.1.5. Dichotomy 5: Aesthetic vs. Pedagogic

Textbooks that are meant for child users have to be child-friendly. In other words, a lot of effort has to be put into its design element. However if the publisher is working on a shoe-string budget he would have to give top priority to the content rather than the look of the book. If from the commercial point of view a good design being more attractive generates better sales, the publisher has to choose what he wants to offer — a good book content wise or a good book design wise and unable to settle for either extreme has to most often choose the via media.
4.1.5.1. Author Testimonials

Dr. Geetha Nagaraj

Especially children’s books should not be crammed with text; it needs a child friendly layout; my greatest success was to convince the publisher to reduce the number of lessons.

4.1.5.2. Publisher Testimonials

Mr. Krishnadev Rao

Many mediocre books are made more interesting with the use of colours/illustrations. And while we might make compromises with respect to the use of colour, design and layout so that prices do not go up, we never do so with content. But something we have realised in the recent past is that if a book doesn’t catch the eye, it becomes difficult to sell even if the content is good.

Dr. Deepa Chattopadhyay

Depending on the level, use of illustration, colour, some amount of fun in the exercises, etc.

4.1.6. Dichotomy 6: Syllabus vs. Learner

The syllabus contains the selection and gradation of content, a chore that in the majority of cases is carried out by an (language) expert who is distanced from the realities of classroom instruction. This poses a big impediment for the author because the list of do’s and don’ts in the syllabus does not often cater to
the actual requirements of the learner. Ensuring that the syllabus approximates as closely as possible to learners (and teacher) needs is an onerous task for materials writers.

4.1.6.1. Author Testimonials

Prof.K. Venkatakrishnan

1. Writer should know what children want; what they can and can’t do. Today there is freedom to go beyond structure; the level is internally decided upon.

2. A Committee prepares the syllabus. The author writes based on this graded syllabus. The author should do gradation ideally. When seven people write based on one syllabus, gradation will not be as we want it to be with different people writing at the same time. An integrated series cannot be achieved.

3. The modern trend is not to write our own lessons but to use original texts. To depict real life. This is okay for adult learners. But the author needs the liberty to change texts for little children.

Prof.T. Sriraman

One of the first things a textbook writer needs is a syllabus; each university should ideally design a syllabus and this should be made available to the publishers; and the author. So that the materials will conform to the needs of the syllabus
Dr. Geetha Nagaraj

1. The worst compromise I had to make was to do with methodology and the syllabus. You start working on a particular framework and the publisher interrupts and wants to change parts of it. So what started off as communicative syllabus often ended as a structural one.

2. You have a mythical average you write to that mythical average; so when a teacher interprets a text in class there might be things that she finds do not work and others that she might want to add on.

4.1.6.2. Publisher Testimonials

Dr. Deepa Chattopadhyay

The approach adopted in presenting the material should keep in mind the target readers and users. For e.g., while doing an ELT book for schools in India, our experience has been that an eclectic approach is what works best. Our classrooms are not yet ready for an out and out communicative approach.

4.1.7. Dichotomy 7: Teacher’s Needs vs. Learner’s Needs

The author writes to a ‘mythical’ audience — he has to get into the minds of teachers and learners and create lessons that motivate, and interest them. While trying to accomplish this he should also make certain that the
materials have taken both users into consideration and are not one-sided. This is a challenging proposition but the best materials are those that have a synergy between teacher and learner needs.

4.1.7.1. Author Testimonials

Prof.K. Venkatakrishnan

1. Teachers shouldn't be slaves to textbooks. It is only supporting material. Use it for reading practice and exercises. Handy for homework. And ensures that students don't waste time. Textbook is not the vital base in classroom teaching. If you take away the textbook the teacher must be able to teach. Use it only for language practice. Go beyond the textbook even for other subjects. Teacher efficiency also to be considered. Dispense with textbook and ideally the textbook should be used only for language practice. Students' load will be reduced if textbook dependence is reduced. Just a note book should do.

2. Some authors feel it is necessary to give lessons of a higher level; some won't stick to a strictly structural syllabus: language has to be within the grammar item described; that way it will be easier. Level will not be uniform when five people write. The linguistic level also has to have cohesiveness.
Prof. V. Sasikumar

1. Materials put into the hands of the students and teachers should be useful to them — what are the aims for which it is learnt: (learners). What are the ways in which we can help the teacher make best use of the material in the classroom: (teacher).

2. What the teacher should know and should do should form part of the textbook itself. Like the analogy of the pressure cooker — the most important instructions were pasted on the cooker. Instructions and information should form part of the textbook. And on the whole, the principles, aims and objectives underlying that particular stage, the classroom methodology on how to teach a prose piece or a poem, organize writing, reading activities, encourage the child to develop study skills, are well worth putting as part of the book; include a small section either at the beginning or at the end of the book addressed to the teacher. Additionally as the main textbook cannot carry all the practice materials that the children would need, workbooks were necessary. Traditional practice was to have three books — teacher’s book, learner’s book and a practice book. The tendency for the teacher was to complete teaching the textbook and if time was left, take up the workbook which is a complete negation of the principle of the workbook. The workbook consisted of exercises which
consolidated and established what was learnt through the textbook — exercises in workbook had to be used at specified intervals, interrupting the textbook; so that should find a place in the textbook — a 3-in-1 book with materials for the teacher’s guidance, materials for the learner in learning and materials for the learner’s practice. This book was bigger than three different books; but the three separate books would have been two to three times bigger than mine if put together; it made economic sense, and ensured that all the materials the teacher and learner needed went within the two covers of the textbook.

Prof.T. Sriraman

1. I want to reach out and while reaching out I give something that they want and also quite a lot more...just like the teacher in the classroom ...you can’t live in an ivory tower... you have to take care of your audience...give them what they want but also what they need.

2. They want something the students can work with not things that can be taught; we want learning materials, teaching materials — that is the main criterion.
4.1.7.2. Publisher Testimonials

Mr. Krishnadev Rao

By making some books totally learner centred we made teachers very uncomfortable for here was a text that had shifted the classroom equilibrium away from the teacher as the giver of information. So while theoretically sound some of these texts did not work well in the class because the teachers were not ready for it, were uncomfortable because the focus moved from teacher to learner. Those books never sold, though it was a lovely idea. So we had to find another way. The teacher as the decision maker was not comfortable with it even though on one level, the theoretical level, (learner centred) there was nothing wrong. But on the practical side the books didn’t get used.

Dr. Deepa Chattopadhyay

A publisher invests a lot of time in developing a series and producing it for the market. The editorial team, along with the general editors and the authors of the series, have worked hard to publish a series which in their opinion incorporates all the relevant points for teaching a specific subject. At times, the teachers in schools are not familiar with the new approaches and methods, and hence cannot make ‘good’ use of the material in the books. In such cases, teacher training programmes can prove to be very helpful.
4.1.8. Dichotomy 8: Author vs. Editor

The editor is the middleman in the author-publisher interface. A person who is closely involved with the actual writing of the book the insights he offers are objective because he is in a situation best suited to critique the book by being distanced from it. Moreover he is the spokesman for the publisher and knows to a great extent what the publisher’s expectations are. The author by being the authority on the subject can feel threatened if the editor imposes his opinions and tampers with the manuscript. Enhancing the book qualitatively is the ultimate goal for both and they should synergise their individual talents to achieve this.

4.1.8.1. Author Testimonies

Prof. K.R. Narayanaswamy

Author and publisher should agree not to encroach on each other’s territory. The in-house editors by and large are a semi-literate lot unqualified for the job but this doesn’t prevent them from trying to improve on the author’s manuscript. An in-house editor’s job in my view is to copy edit the manuscript and prepare it for the press but the kind of in-house editors I have had to deal with had high aspirations which went beyond doing the pedestrian job of copy-editing but the aspirations were not matched by qualifications in terms of talent, knowledge and experience. Some of them would not even make the grade as copy-editors!
Prof. K. Venkatakrishnan

The editor should be an ELT person to understand the rationale behind the materials

4.1.8.2. Publisher Testimonies

Dr. Malathy Krishna

1. The editor — the onus is mostly on him, who with the publisher takes up the responsibility from conception to completion. With the manuscript the editor infuses the required format — [functional + structural textbook]

2. Publisher is product oriented. Author is process oriented — work is not orderly; often slipshod. The language of authors has errors/slips; Indian authorship has made great strides but English is not standard

3. Authors often want to display scholarship

Mr. Krishnaddev Rao

There is a balance of the old with the young in the team — editorial decisions are made by the older group who were there from the very beginning, and who will not allow us to forsake our social responsibility and the younger team which brings in an aggressiveness and look at the marketing perspective. We get both inputs. It’s a very happy marriage which is producing encouraging results which would not be the case if we had only one and not the other.
Dr. Vani Vasudevan

The relationship with the author is close. This helps to make sure that authors deliver manuscripts on time too! Good public relations is essential. The editor needs to share ideas with authors. A strictly formal approach is often counterproductive. Constant interaction is essential. Newer authors may need more of it. The editor has to ultimately integrate the author’s ideas with market needs. Editors and publishers have different kinds of interface with authors.

Mr. G. Olivannan

Publishers should feel the pulse of the authors. Editors should not directly interact with authors. The publisher has to balance this out. Editors should not play or tamper with authors work because unlike other trades here it is the creativity of an individual that is displayed; so the editor should not put his pen on the author’s work rashly. To avoid such confrontations the publisher must intervene. Communication is important.

Dr. Deepa Chattopadhyay

The author is an important player in the publishing business and thus publishers value a useful author. It is important that the publisher and the author work more-or-less at the same wavelength. It thus helps to select authors whose principles, attitude, expertise one appreciates. Very
often, schoolbooks and educational series have multiple authors. One has to select these authors carefully so that the team can work well. Differences can arise in the course of working, but in most cases these can be worked out. Perceptions could be different at the outset. The publisher knows the market well and has probably identified the gap the new book will fill. It is the responsibility of the publisher to write in detail the objective of the book — what kind of market, the competing books, the gap in the market, etc. There may need to be several rounds of discussions to arrive at an objective that the two agree upon. The timeframe, the amount of editing, the number of illustrations, etc. can be roughly discussed ahead of time to avoid complications later.

A cordial relationship is necessary. Cordiality always pays its dividends. An author well taken care of by the publisher and fulfils his anticipations, will bring out his best or his creations, to their mutual benefit. (The publisher should remember that the author is the actual creator of his publication)

4.1.9. Conclusion

The eight dichotomies listed above emerged from the case studies. The next section analyses how these dichotomies or dual constraints would be handled by the author and the publisher. Will they compromise for the collective good? Or will they collaborate and work out the problem areas in a spirit of co-operation? The following section first represents the constraints diagrammatically and follows it up with the discussion.
4.2. The Constraints: Compromise, Collaborate and Co-operate

Fig. 2 Diagrammatic Representation of the Constraints

- COMPROMISE
  - SOCIO POLITICAL Vs. ACADEMIC
  - TIME Vs. QUALITY

- COLLABORATE/CO-OPERATE
  - TEACHING EXPERIENCE Vs. WRITING SKILL
  - SYLLABUS Vs. LEARNER
  - PEDAGOGIC Vs. COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS
  - TEACHER NEEDS Vs. LEARNER NEEDS
  - THEORY Vs. PRACTICALITY
  - AESTHETIC Vs. PEDAGOGIC
  - AUTHOR Vs. EDITOR
  - PUBLISHERS EXPERIENCE Vs. AUTHORS EXPERIENCE

ELT MATERIALS
4.2.1. Analysis of the constraints

The diagrammatic representation of the constraints (Fig. 2) is meant to drive across two points — firstly the constraints faced by authors and publishers in materials production can be negotiated either by compromising or by collaborating and co-operating. And secondly, the areas where they can collaborate and co-operate outnumber the areas of compromise.

4.2.1.1. Compromises

1. Socio-Political vs. Academic

In the former case the author cannot be idealistic academically, but must take into consideration the socio-political context and come down from his ivory tower. This necessitates a compromising stance, for the book that is out of tune with its time will not sell in the market. Political and social correctness is an obsession with quality conscious publishers. But academic and literary value should not be sacrificed on the altar of socio-political appropriacy. Achieving a perfect balance of both might not always be possible. This calls for a compromise.

2. Time vs. Quality

The author can go on striving for perfection if given as much time as he wants — he might never complete his brief! The author should strive to write the best materials within the available time frame. The publisher will have to
compromise on the quality of materials he gets if he sets unrealistic time frames.

4.2.1.2. Collaboration and Co-operation

1. Teaching Experience vs. Writing Skill

The author will have to combine both qualities because the best materials are a combination of both. Teaching experience alone won’t guarantee good writing skills and likewise a skilled writer may not be able to anticipate the problems that arise in a classroom. The author is more confident if he writes from experience — when he can feel the pulse of the classroom.

The publisher wants creativity in materials production and teaching experience is secondary. The selection of authors depends more on those who possess ideas that sell.

To illustrate this fusion of sound teaching experience with creative writing skills, one needs to just look at the composition of State Board textbook committees. You will find a fine balance of practising teachers and language experts. This might not be practical in certain ways but is a good example to emulate.
2. **Syllabus Vs. Learner**

The publisher is more worried about the syllabus. The author is more worried about the learner. Both these are not exactly opposite. It is the author’s job to turn the syllabus into learner friendly materials. The syllabus is abstract; it attains life when viewed at from the perspective of the learner. A starting point for collaboration could be the framing of a more flexible syllabus.

3. **Pedagogic Vs. Commercial**

For the author pedagogic considerations supersede commercial ones. What promotes learning is given top priority. For the publisher money is the prime criterion. So very often the author has to collaborate with the publisher and listen to his commercial voice. This does not mean that the publisher can ignore the author’s pedagogic acumen.

4. **Teacher Needs Vs. Learner Needs**

The author is concerned with what the learner needs from the materials. Often a teacher friendly book ignores learners needs. The publisher is more concerned with pleasing the teachers because they are the people who help prescribe the textbook. So very often teacher demands are met in toto — model question papers, notes, summaries of poems etc. are provided. The author will have to collaborate to please the publisher or the book may not sell.
5. **Theory Vs. Practice**

Authors like to experiment with new language teaching theories often ignoring its capacity to translate as good language teaching/learning materials. To the publisher a textbook that sells is one that works well in the classroom. The author will have to co-operate with the publisher to ensure that the materials are teachable.

6. **Aesthetic Vs. Pedagogic**

Beautifully presented materials need not be the best language teaching or learning materials. The publisher is concerned with giving the book its look, but should realise that in order to sell consistently well a book is not judged by its cover, but by its contents. So achieving that balance is sacrosanct.

7. **Author Vs. Editor**

The most talked about relationship in the interface, the author and the editor should learn to co-operate by respecting their individual roles in the production of a textbook. The editor will be concerned with the acceptability and therefore saleability of the materials. The author is concerned with the academic worth of the materials. If both stick to their roles and accept constructive criticism, the value of the materials will improve manifold.
8. **Publisher’s Expertise Vs. Author’s Experience**

The nature of the interaction between author and publisher depends on how they relate to each other. In other words, an experienced author will call the shots with a new publisher whereas an established publisher will invariably dominate a neophyte author. Whatever the equation, a textbook is the combined effort of their collective experience and expertise.

The art of textbook writing and publishing is evident in the manner in which authors and publishers negotiate the constraints. The best textbooks are, probably, those that have benefited from the adept handling of the dichotomous constraints in the author-publisher interface. The next section takes a close look at one such outstanding series of textbooks that has set a precedent in ELT textbook publishing.

4.3. **A Case in Point: The Success of ‘Gulmohar’**

If there is one series of English language textbooks that have stood the test of time it is the ‘Gulmohar’ series. But it was not a success when first published in 1974. According to Krishnadev Rao, Director (Commercial), Orient Longman:

‘Gulmohar’ was not a commercial success first — it took time to establish itself. It was a book that was so contrary to everything that was happening in textbook writing at that point of time — how can Indians write an English book? All books till that time were authored by British writers...
(Michael West et al.) and even those written in India were written by foreigners; and all these books were huge commercial successes and with excellent content.

‘Gulmohar’ was launched in 1974 but it became a commercial success only after 10 years, by 1984. But once it established, gained acceptance it changed the whole paradigm of textbook publishing in India. Today it would be very hard to find an English textbook (in India) authored by anyone other than an Indian. ‘Gulmohar’ was not planned as a commercial success but it became one. A moral, social responsibility — it was looked at from that perspective first. That it also became a commercial success was only incidental.

Revision was necessary because ‘Gulmohar’ was not bearing fruit financially as well as it had initially. So we had to re-look at our vision, goals, commercially. Another reason was that till the 1990s the books worked wonderfully; the 1990s saw the liberalization, the opening up of the markets and the consumer was exposed suddenly to a wide variety of products. Choices were more than before, so the same market shift worked in the textbook area too; people expected more and wanted more. Till then everyone was brought up on the notion that frugality was a virtue. This concept was turned on its head. And to keep with the times, ‘Gulmohar’ was revised, apart from the fact that other conditions contributed to its revision — like lower sales, more competition etc.
We did not want to be left behind. 'Gulmohar' was decades old now and even though the authors, the editors, and the content was top quality, the presentation was not top quality. The market demanded better quality. Also people were getting tired and bored of reading the same lessons; so interest had to be revived. Even books have shelf life.

Competition was also limited till that point of time. Till then not too many published ELT textbooks other than British publishers.

Entry barriers into publishing had also become very low. Any one could become a publisher. The entire process of book making had simplified with the advent of newer technologies, computerization, and printing technology had also changed very much.

Also new publishers had no baggage to carry unlike Orient Longman. They just catered to the context they started publishing in, catered to the existing market conditions. Unlike Orient Longman which had baggage in the sense that it was an old publisher with a reputation at stake.

'Gulmohar' has become bigger than its creators — it's a brand now. And it's not easy to repeat the success story of 'Gulmohar'; we don't know whether we have the guts to do a 'Gulmohar' all over again. (Rao 2002)
4.3.1. Conclusion

The grand success in materials production, 'Gulmohar', is a tough act to follow. However, the lessons to be learned from its success are more relevant to this study. The brief description above of the evolution of the book over a period of twenty-five years reveals that several features went into its making: vision, sustaining power, market savvy, commercial erudition, inspiring content, excellent presentation... For many more such success stories to be spawned, textbook production and those engaged in its creation should try to emulate and replicate the precedent set by 'Gulmohar'.

4.4. Final Questions

Juxtaposing theoretical data with case study insights gives a clear road map on how to improve author-publisher relations. Keeping the constraints (mutual and exclusive) in mind, both parties can carry out the task of writing and selling textbooks with greater awareness. More important is the question of innovation and its position in the interface. The answers to that are also provided by the protagonists themselves. Market dynamics combined with newer theoretical expositions will ensure that both authors and publishers do not have time to rest on their laurels. The final question left to be answered is — what are the implications of the findings to the overall framework of Second Language learning? These could be listed as:
1. The publisher and author have to be involved in the decision making process because they are closest to the end users. Curriculum planning and syllabus designing should be done in consultation with the author and publisher.

2. Publishing shouldn't be monopolised by government publishers; a level playing field is achievable through deregulation and de-nationalisation.

3. Publishing has to be more professionally managed.

4. Authors and publishers need a common forum to voice their views and opinions; a body or group of professionals from both fields who will assess the problems encountered and offer solutions.

4.5. Suggestions for Neophyte Writers from the Experts

Textbook writing is a combination of various skills and varied experience. The authors interviewed in this study have had extensive exposure to the mechanics of writing. Their wisdom can be utilised by up-coming authors in order to be prepared for the rigours and rewards of the job. This is what they have to say:

Prof. A.E. Subramaniam: Start writing only after you have gained more than adequate experience in the field you work in. An understanding of the interests of the children as well as of their learning problems is necessary. So also is a good acquaintance with the theoretical studies relating to the field.
Books written by others can afford guidance for avoiding pitfalls and shortcomings.

**Prof.K.R. Narayanaswamy:** The writer must bear in mind all the time the kind of readers he is writing for, their needs and capabilities, so that he is readily understood and if possible, enjoyed. In other words, the author should conform to the ethics of writing.

**Prof.K. Venkatakrishnan:** Novice writers should first analyse the existing books and see why certain themes/exercises are preferred to others. They should have actual teaching experience in the classes they write books for. They should be aware of current trends and practices in ELT. They should be good in both language and language teaching. Novice writers must sit with experienced ones. Teaching experience with the ability to evaluate a textbook is essential.

**Prof.V. Sasikumar:** Have constant touch with the classroom; keep your feet firmly in the classroom. The textbook writer should not be a full time teacher. Act out in your mind whatever you put into the textbook. If you have experience, you will be able to recreate what ever happens in the classroom.

Look at other people's work constantly; tell yourself that you are not the best writer in the world. Learn from others; go behind the textbook and ask why the writer has put these things in the book; then copy it without any sense of shame; in the business of textbook writing everyone is imitating everyone
else; no harm; there is no copy right on any pattern of exercise. Read journals to keep abreast of the latest thinking in ELT.

4.6. Afterword

From assumption to evidence, the analysis of the relationship between authors and publishers in materials production has laid bare the why’s and why not’s in the interface and given clarity, presumably, to the reasons why authors and publishers behave the way they do. The following quote, more or less, sums up the whole debate:

All of us who write dream from time to time if not of great financial rewards from our writing, then at least of gaining the kind of recognition and respect for our work which will mean that we never again have trouble in finding a publisher and that the firm concerned will give us first-class attention at all times. [...] Well, we can dream. But being realistic, admitting that we are not in the great bestseller class or recognised as one of the 20th century’s greatest geniuses, we should plant our feet firmly on earth. No sensible author turns to writing full time unless he is assured of being able to support himself and his family, probably with an income from another source. No sensible author builds his hopes too high, nor expects everything he writes to reach the same level of success. No sensible author forgets that it is not only the quality of his work which determines how well his book does, but remembers that there are
other factors, such as fashion, booms and recossions, and luck. No sensible author neglects to understand that his relationship with his publisher, however friendly it may be, is basically a business one, liable to change, or that his publisher and the rest of the staff are human and liable to make mistakes. No sensible author believes that everyone is perfect — even himself. (Legat 160-161)